GUN PLAY

when she was unable to sleep. It came sharp as an arrow through the drumming tent of her wakefulness. She would kill Walton Craswell.

It was the only way out. It was her one possible escape from that accumulated agony of hopelessness which was slowly but surely driving her mad, which at that very moment was sabering the back of her head with its familiar sharp pain. She would kill Walton Craswell, and that would end the whole intolerable business.

It would end the thing at a stroke, it would a company, which disseptions that was five months before her daughter Anada was born. And Coscierella by his second hemorrhage, had to be taken back to Colorado. There, after her daughter's birth, she again struggled to recover lost ground. But the fight was a losing one. The best she could do was to mark time by attempting to found a dramatic school. For two bitter years she wrestled with her school, doing what she could to support a dying husband and a dying home. After Costerella's death she joined a road company, which dis-

It would end the thing at a stroke, the same as you end a cricket's incessant drone by smashing its body. And that, she knew, would give her a chance to breathe again. For life had grown like the room in which she lay, the musty room that smelled of sodden carpet perpetually sour with water spilled from a rickety washstand. It seemed to crowd too suffocatingly close about her. She was only fighting for air, the air without which she could not live. And in doing the thing, she could do it so cunningly she would never be accused. Fate, with its continuous rain of cruelties, had at least been kind in this. It had left in her hand the mand the grown and the same and the same and the same and the same as the s only fighting for air, the air without which she could not live. And in doing the thing, she could do it so cunningly she would never be accused, she would never even be suspected. Fate, with its continuous rain of cruelties, had at least been kind in this. It had left in her hand the machinery for carrying out a crime

this. It had left in her hand the machinery for carrying out a crime which the world would accept as an accident.

For it would be a crime, Katherine Kinsella reminded herself, as she lay on her undulatory thin mattress as rigid as she would some day lie in her coffin. It would be a crime, no matter how unselfish her motives and no matter how extenuating the circumstances. Killing was killing, and no one did such things lightly, and no one did such things lightly. But there were times when such things were imposed upon you. The world did that when it went to war. There were times when war made you kill or be killed, times when the enemy at your door had to go down, or only too soon your whole house of life would smoulder in ruins.

And young Wallie Craswell was the enemy at her door. He was an enemy.

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New York by this time had doubly and blither that he had nothing for her. Her youthfulness had slipped away, her face had thinned and hardened, and no one else in that preoccupied city seemed to have anything for her.

But she had to live. So eventually she went out as assistant to a xylophone player, where daily and blither, ly adorned in rose-colored fleshings and a huzzar's jacket of blue and gold, she was compelled to act as feeder and props to a trick musician.

From this intolerable position she finally escaped to small parts in a stock company at Los Angeles. There, in the end, she once more attached herself to a road company moving east.

For Katherine Kinsella, before all things in life, had loved and brooded over and treasured her only daughter Anada. From the first day of her birth she had brooded over that quiet-Anada. From the first day of her birth she had brooded over that quietly breathing body, had brooded over the time brooding over her cub, had guarded it and watched it grow and sought to impart to it the wisdom which comes only to the old lioness on whom life has fixed its scars. There was a time when, without abashment, she had been able to take that body in her arms, when the love which turned to a foolish ache in her heart had been able to expend itself in simple and satisfying services. But the impalpable yet ponderous defenses of girlhood had grown up about the child. Mysteriously the reserves of woman-hood had widened between them. And the girl, while chained to her very side, had escaped her. She had escaped for the time being. But there always outward and always from the

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e night o sleep.
arrow
tent of the first flush of his success as a producing-manager, had considered her for the American tour of the younger Salvini.

But that was five months before her

through the tears that streaked the

in the end, she once more attached herself would smoulder in ruins.

And young Wallie Craswell was the enemy at her door. He was an enemy already within her door, an enemy against whom, because of his very closeness, she had regarded herself as helpless. She had not been able to fight him as life had taught her to fight. Even her hatred for him was shot through with a perverse pity touched by envy. He was, in many ways, little more than a boy. But with the unconsidering quick cruelty of youth he had come trampling through the one jealously guarded inclosure in her dusty courtyard of failure. And with that lost to her, there was nothing left in life.

CHE warned herself that she must think straight about it all, though

between her and the warm body which she might have reached out in proved so irksome and so prolonged which she might have reached out in the dark and touched. For many a burden she possessed an undemental month now they had slept side by side in the same bed, shrinking back from even accidental contact, as impersonal as two knife blades on a table top of marble. And that had not a little to do with the slow-thickening cloud of hopelessness which threatened to choke her.

An Unusual Story of the Stage and Its People

have a new vehicle ready for productive soft in the primary by overuse, where the music of a parallelism of actual life as it then tricks of her trade. The time that she could give him was limited, but he was patience. Tricks and turned him over to the review and the superior of the substitute a ball cartridge seems with the Kinsella Amusement Company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the third truck when this threadded actual company shunand the larger but awkward puppy to walk the wast settlement. There were the shuns a settlement. There were the shuns a larger but awkward puppy to walk the wast stirring in their graves. A double-level was and the mushroom centers usually silven over to the Five layer of the company and the manner of the company and the manner of the company and the manner of the company and the company and the manner of the company and the manner of the company and t



CHE warned hereaff that she must

Similar establish about is all, though as he had been fareered of late by control of the con

hitherto overlooked. It announced to her that in the day which had proved so irksome and so prolonged a burden she possessed an underly the possessed and the possessed and underly the possessed and un

THERE was no need for undue haste, she kept reminding herself.

knew nothing to know it. And an emotional appeal was out of the question. It was beyond her. It would never reach the self-contained girl who had built up about her young life its laborious walls of reserve. And there was the added danger of precipitating what was not yet final.

So Katherine Kinsella became discreet, silently and reptiliously of the production and one of the few roles where the actress who had grown old in the manipulation of second-hand emotions could get a genuine thrill of power. This mother was represented as the bad woman of the key, now, which opened the door- was compelled to remain silent as to the carrying out of her plan. She was armed to strike now, and the sooner she struck the better. She realized that when they opened at Carbona Junction their first performance would have to be "The formance wo

of those blanks. And the rest was sufficiently simple, once she was sure of her cartridge being there. For the shot, she remembered, was fired point blank, with her sneering victim falling close to her feet. The actor who had preceded young Craswell, in fact, had inaugurated the custom of wearing a sheet of asbestos fixed by two is safety plus under his short Mexican Jacket edged with its sequins of brass, e. for once, through holding the pistol too close to his body, she had set fire to his clothing.

It would, of course, be accepted as an accident. But she would have to pave the way for that consummation. And that campaign of preparation began with a less infolerant attitude toward the youth who had so casually pulled down her house of life about her ears. She could even sense his bewilderment at that open softening toward him, but she was too old an actress to fail in sustaining a role once assumed. The task with regard to her own daughter was both easier.

"Well, you a bette, general the morose-eyed muffs on!" warned the morose-eyed muffs on!" warned the morose-eyed to make fire the chief, who, in should be made after the chief, who, in should the wicket after the chief, who, in should be made able to make everything grist for his mill. "For youll think you're in a shooting gallery before they get their first curtain down!"

"My boy, there's lots to learn about gunplay, in this business," was the other's solemn rejoiner. "And I've got to get fixed about that shooting scene of ours in 'Monte Carlo.'"

"Darn little help you'll get from this outfit," observed young Loeser as the first crash from the three-piece jazz band sounded from the obsolete old orchestra pit.

It was Hunkie Hoppe, counting up the house through the curtain peep hole, who first spotted Budanski. For one incredulous moment he studied the silvery-haired man with the inhouse through the rear's of her spirit seamed burned out. It was not alone that the countered Anada Kinsella, that she went through her part with the concernment of the wicket

It was harder to remain undisturbed under the coldly appraising glance of the girl who had grown away from her. But it was not hard to fall forlornly back into a pretense at the more intimate note of their earlier years. For this girl with the barricided eyes was, after all, her own daughter, flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. As much as life had robbed her of the equipment to express her love, this self-contained young woman with the timorously audacious will of youth was the only It was harder to remain undisturbed press her love, this self-contained young woman with the timorously audacious will of youth was the only

Kinsella found herself changing color before that cool and level stare of curiosity. The girl, for some reason, made her think of a marble-cold figure of justice with invisible scales folded up her stocking.

"Why should I have to play up because he happens to be out front?" cause he happens to be out front?" asked the quiet-eyed girl as she folded up her stocking.

"Because Budanski's the biggest "Because Budanski's the biggest" in America."

balanced in her hand.

But her greater difficulties were not those of the spirit. There were other and more definite problems to be faced. She felt the need, from the first, of foreshadowing the use of

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

electrify his company with the news He encountered Anada Kinsella He encountered Anada Kinsella, made up and waiting. She was seated on a rickety flight of property steps, quietly darning a silk stocking.
"Girlie," cried Hunkie, galvanized into mysterious excitement, "you gotta send it

young woman with the timorously audacious will of youth was the only thing she had ever loved.

It was no easy thing to break the habit of silence which had grown up between them. But she could afford to be patient; she was even compelled to be patient; she was even compelled to be patient. There were days during that quiet courtship for lost confidences, when the older woman would find the younger staring at her with a frown of perplexaly on her troubled young face. Once, too, Katherine Kinsella found herself changing color before that cool and level stare of curiosity. The girl, for some reason.

"Who's Budanski?" she inquired, turning the stocking on her arm. Hunkie, who came from the banks of the Hudson, groaned aloud. "Who's Budanski? And you advertism' yourself as an actress! You might as well say who's George Cohan or who's Shakespeare! Who's Budanski?" she inquired, turning the stocking on her arm. Hunkie, who came from the banks of the Hudson, groaned aloud. "Who's Budanski?" she inquired, turning the stocking on her arm.

"Because Budanski's the biggest producing manager in America," averred Hunkie, with the emphasis of retarded enunciation.
"That doesn't necessarily interest me in him," was the other's cool re-

the past. Then he looked back at the woman being shut off from his view

"She's got a great face," he ven

by the lowering curtain.

tured.

seemed burned out. It was not alone that she went through her part with an air of pathos and repose that seemed new to her. But life had hammered and shaped and chilled her to a cutting edge, and the knife went deep. Yet she yearned over her daughter with a tenderness which no learner remained in her seement. longer remained in her control, for she could see happiness in the girl's she could see happiness in the girl's face, and that happiness, she knew, was so soon to end. The girl would not understand the final kindness in all the seeming cruelty. But she would learn in time. It would shock her out of her childish dreams. It would mature her, send her back to her life's work with a riner mind. downYou who could ever hope to portray it.
Cohan udanudanwould mature her, send her back to
her life's work with a riper mind.
for it was only those who knew grief
who could ever hope to portray it.
That was the price they all had to
pay. And it was too late now to

turn back. turn back.

She remembered that as she confronted the young Mexican grande who was her fictitious enemy of the moment. Yet he was a mere boy, she also remembered as she gestured and cried with the automatism of habit so fixed that her thoughts were left without hindrance. But he had taken out of her life the only thing she had loved. He was leaving her, in his blindness, nothing with which to face the bald and empty future. She had planned and schemed and toiled for that future, and if a price was being demanded to hold it, it was she herself who was paying that price. And she was ready.

YET as the act went on she had her sickening moments of hesitation And to fight back that threatening as the impersonation of all evil. She had to force herself to hate him. She was compelled to drug herself with the venom of a tortured and twisted imagination. She had to lash herself into a fury at the thing which it was essential she should abhor. She had to fashion make believe into the mold of actuality until stage illusion and life itself merged and blended. until her dizzy brain stood convinced

that in saving the mimic daughter of that tawdry melodrama she was saving the breathing and living daughter who could and should not be taken away from her. And in doing this, for the first time in many a year of over-facile ranting, she lost herself in her part. Budanski slouching low seat, made a movement which the man sitting beside him accepted as

mistake. For he could hear Budgh-ski's whisper in the darkness. "My God," breathed the Napoleon of the stage, "that woman can act!" "She's sure tearing it off," acknowl-edged young Loeser, with his eyes still on the tragic figure so cunningly concealing the revolver from her in-tended victim.

conceaning the revover is a tended victim.

"Watch her gun-play." whispered Budanski, leaning forward, by this time, with his hands on his knees.

"D' you notice her knees, chief?" came from the other, in an answering whisper. "See 'em shake under that skirt."

"Watch her gun-play!" retorted "Watch her gun-play!" retorted Budanski, intent on the stage. He did not fully understand what was taking place there. But this did not greatly disturb him. He was less interested, at the moment, in the movements themselves than in the manner in which those movements were carried out. What held him was the precious air of genuiness about it all, the stark convincingness of the world-weary mother so grimly intent all, the stark convincingness of the world-weary mother so grimly intent on delivering her daughter from evil. He nursed the suspicion that this final flower of stage characterization was lost on the audience about him. That audience asked only for the easier thrill and the more obvious effect. But this overlooked flowering of artistry was the lonely blossom he had once searched the world for, and had but rarely found. He seldom searched for it among what Loeser called the bush leaguers, for he had long clung to a pet theory that five continuous years in stock or on the road spelled ruin to any player's art. Yet here was a woman who must have spent the a woman who must have spent the best part of her life under the corstepped, for a great fire had burned that day in her body, and now a great weariness had taken its place. But there was to be no turning back. Whatever it might cost her that night, she was going to save what imposed restrictions, just as it was a performance with equally established limitations. But, as far as it went, it was perfect. The woman had lost herself in her part.

"There's greatness in that," be said aloud.

she was getting it over. He could see that by the love which softened her face as she turned to her daughter. And he could see it again in the steel-cold lines of hate which hardened her flaccid mouth as she turned delib-erately back to the youth who stood

r fifteen years ago.

* * * *

OUNG Loeser verified his chief's

spectacular memory for names of

peet. Then he looked beek at the spectation. It impressed him as the deliberateness of the well-trained hand grown sure of its tool, grown contemptous of its cutting edge. She was even giving depth to a situ-ation primarily shallow, for what con-fronted him was no mere demirep sodden with crime, cheaply shooting where shooting was called for, but a woman of emotion darkly stirred, only too tragically aware of what awaited her, yet driven against her will to the final resort of force where force

plan. She was armed to strike now, and the sooner she struck the better. She realized that when they opened at Carbona Junction their first performance would have to be "The Range Wolf." For destiny had thrust into her hands too precious a chance to be overlooked.

Budanski, with his coast train limping into Carbona Junction five hours behind schedule, missed his connection for the east and found that it would be midnight before the transcontinental express could stop to take him aboard. So he and young Loeser tired of reading scripts and arguing over the infinitely ramified details of his coming production of "Monte Carlo," dified moodily at a Chinese restaurant, and listlessly explored the filluminated main sireet of Carbona Junction.

Budanski stopped before the narrow fover of the Dibbley. Theater, ran a haggard eye over the frame of faded photographs visualizing the caste of "The Range Wolf," and promptly suc-



"Great for what?"
"It strikes me as a pretty good face for that countess of ours when 'Monte Carlo' goes on."
The man beside him moved impatiently.
"I went an actuaca not a face."